



EACC NEWS

The East Asia Christian Conference is an organ of continuing fellowship and co-operation among the Churches and Christian Councils in East Asia.

Secretary for Information: Lee Soo Jin

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THE CHURCH IN NEPAL

KATHMANDU - The Nepali Church, loosely bound together in an association called the Nepal Christian Fellowship, under the able leadership of a Nepali pastor of Indian citizenship, Pastor ROBERT KARTHAK, is small but growing. There are approximately 500 or more Christians across the land, in 25 smaller or larger congregations. This Church is entirely independent of foreign missionary administration, funds or leadership. Foreign fraternal workers, of the United Mission to Nepal, and other missionary agencies in the land, participate in the activities of local Nepali Christian congregations only as ordinary members, and never assume positions of leadership.

There is no law against reading the Bible in Nepal and no one risks imprisonment for doing so. The Nepali Constitution allows a man freedom to worship and practise the religion of his father, but forbids conversion to another faith. That crime, and the crime, of urging or assisting a man to change his ancestral faith, are punishable by law. However, of the many Nepali citizens who have been converted to Christ, and have been baptised, only a very few have been arrested, brought to trial and given jail sentences. Presently, there are 7 Christians in Pokhara, 120 miles west of Kathmandu, who are just finishing their 3-month jail sentences, having been tried and convicted for the crime of changing their ancestral faith from Hinduism to Christianity. For some reason, His Majesty's Government has chosen to take a "benign neglect" toward the law. Conversion to Christ is a non-cognizable offence, and arrest and prosecution will be made only if someone makes a definite and determined complaint and charge against a new Christian. So the Church continues to grow slowly, under pressure, and prays for the day when the law will be changed to allow full religious freedom. Nepal, after all, is a member of the United Nations, and a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The United Mission to Nepal is the largest of the Christian missions at work in Nepal and has been in existence for nearly 19 years. 27 different churches and missionary societies from 12 countries make up the UMN. There are 190 overseas workers and nearly 700 national staff in the 12 projects and institutions of the UMN.

Jesuits of the Roman Catholic Church operate 3 schools in Kathmandu Valley. The International Fellowship does medical work in Pokhara and the Seventh-Day Adventists have a small hospital in Banepa, 18 miles east of Kathmandu.

CHRISTIAN COUNCILS SEEK END TO PROPOSED FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING

JAKARTA - The Council of Churches in Indonesia has joined seven other National Christian Councils in an effort to end the proposed nuclear testing by France in the South Pacific. In a letter to French Christians, the joint appeal stressed that "nuclear weapon testing by France in the South Pacific causes us deep distress". It appealed to the churches in France to "make strong and urgent representations to the French government to bring these tests to a sudden and immediate end."

The letter was addressed to the Protestant Federation of France and the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. Other signatories were the Australian Council of Churches, the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Melanesian Council of Churches, the National Councils of Churches in Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines and the Pacific Conference of Churches. The effort was initiated by the Council of Churches in New Zealand. Seventeen councils around the Pacific Ocean were invited to participate as signatories.

Senator LIONEL MURPHY, Attorney-General of the Australian Government left for the Hague yesterday, to present the Australian and New Zealand Governments case against the proposed French nuclear testing in the Pacific before the International Court of Justice.

CHINA REVISITED

TOKYO - Dr. TED JOHNSON, who was a missionary in China from 1935 to 1941, recently revisited China with his wife. On his way back to China, where he is Programme and Planning Secretary for the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Dr. JOHNSON discussed his experience and impressions with a group of 50 people at an informal meeting in Tokyo sponsored by the National Council of Churches of Japan.

Compared with the China of thirty years ago - when poverty and illiteracy was widespread, human suffering rampant and the work of churches, hospitals, universities and agricultural experiments barely touching the fringes of China's needs - during his 22-day visit, JOHNSON encountered the many changes brought about by the acceptance of the self-discipline imposed by Mao's philosophy. Housing is simple, life drab from a Western point of view, but consistent with Mao's philosophy of being content with essentials before luxuries.

JOHNSON cited five trends and dynamics of life in China today: Firstly, the determination to be self-reliant in every way. Secondly, the development of leadership among people at every level. Thirdly, the pervasiveness of service to one's fellowmen as individual motivation. Fourthly, the recognition of and equal representation of minority groups (Korean, Tibetan and others). Fifthly, a sense of friendship with people around the world as evidenced by the visits of cultural missions to China.

JOHNSON voiced his greatest apprehension over the Mao cult which, "China will have to deal with at some point in her development". "There is the conviction and faith in China that anything is possible. In the Selected Readings of Mao, which is given to all visitors, Mao says, "Who says a chicken feather can't fly up to heaven?" JOHNSON felt that he saw "chicken feathers flying up to heaven", during his visit.

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"The churches are under the Three-Self Movement, which is in turn under the Bureau of Religious Affairs. The problem of the Christian community in China is not that of Government restrictions, but of how the Christian community can express itself effectively in the midst of a society whose economic, political and social structures seem more in line with Christian concepts than do those in the so-called Christian cultures. Churches have not asked for the return of the 30 church buildings in Nanking confiscated by the government at the time of liberation in October, 1949 because the churches have not decided what mission is for them today. Theology faces the problem of determining the right kind of curriculum for the new society."

Much of Christian teaching is done in the family setting of Christian homes. No Bibles are printed. No Bibles are for sale. Bibles can be sent in but probably not in quantity.

AFRICAN CONCERN OVER NATO INITIATIVES

GENEVA - The General Committee of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) meeting in Tananarive, Madagascar, last month expressed grave concern that NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, might soon extend its activities into the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. In a letter addressed to the churches in Europe and North America it asked them to press their governments not to transfer "Cold War brinkmanship ... to our part of the world". And it continued, "We are terrified by the possibility that Southern Africa might well become the Vietnam of the latter part of this century".

The AACC also heard an appeal on behalf of Sudan from Mr. BETHUEL KIPLAGAT, director of the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. He asked African churches to find personnel, material and financial support for the US\$2 million programme undertaken by the Sudan Council of Churches.

A strong plea for church unity was also sounded by the General Committee which called on African churches "to press forward resolutely towards the organic union of the churches so that the world may believe".

THE AMPHLETT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

BIRMINGHAM - The Amphlett Scholarship Fund is a fund to enable the Churches in East Asia to send men and women of Chinese nationality or of Chinese descent to study in the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, England. The Selly Oak Colleges are a federation of nine independent colleges supported by various Protestant churches and other organisations. They are ecumenical and international in outlook with some seven to eight hundred men and women usually representing about forty nationalities.

The scholarship is for the study of "theology" which include Christian mission, Biblical Studies, theology, Islamic Studies, Christian education and social work. These are all one year courses and do not for the most part lead to examinations for any degree or diploma; the courses are offered for their own value in developing understanding and capacity for service.

Applications should be received by the end of June for study in Selly Oak commencing in September the following academic year. They should be sent by a Council of Churches, a synod or other national body. Requests for further information, should be sent to:

The Secretary, The Amphlett Scholarship Fund
The Selly Oak Colleges
Birmingham, B29 6LE, ENGLAND

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

GENEVA - This year marks the 25th anniversary of the World Council of Churches. In August 1948, representatives of 147 Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox churches convened in Amsterdam in what they confidently declared was the WCC's First Assembly. A quarter-century later the 263 churches of the WCC remember with gratitude the contribution of these valiant pioneers and pledge anew their insights and resources in response to His call to faith, witness and service. Landmark programmes include: resettlement of refugees; peace initiatives through UN; stronger Orthodox participation in WCC; increasing cooperation with Vatican; rehabilitation of Palestinian refugees; support to victims of racial oppression; work camps; aid to earthquake victims, exploring faith and order questions.

PAKISTAN COUNCIL RECEIVED EACC VISITORS

LAHORE - Visiting Lahore a fortnight ago were U KYAW THAN, General Secretary of the EACC, Dr. T. B. SIMATUPANG a president of NCC Indonesia and Mr. KENNETH DE LENAROLLE a secretary of NCC, Sri Lanka. They were taking part in the twenty-fifth annual general meeting of the Pakistan Christian Council held at the YMCA hall at Lahore from 26 - 28th April. Their presence as that of other fraternal participants and the cabled greetings from different parts of the world emphasized the world-embracing fellowship in which the churches in Pakistan bear their witness together. Preceding the annual meeting at Lahore, leading Pakistani churchmen and Dr. SIMATUPANG attended the "Minorities Conference" held at Islamabad. The Conference provided President ALI BHUTTO and the minority groups to meet together and explain to each other the approach to national unity and equality of opportunity as well as rights of every citizen, particularly those of the minority groups.

At the annual general meeting of the Christian Council, the EACC visitors spoke out of their individual backgrounds. Dr. SIMATUPANG brought greetings of the churches in Indonesia, and Mr. DE LENAROLLE of Sri Lanka spoke of the Christian experience in his country when church-related educational institutions were taken over by the state. U KYAW THAN underlined the fellowship that binds churches and councils within the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) and the positive outcome in Christian experience for the churches in Burma when they went through similar developments as in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. He also referred to the forthcoming Assembly of EACC in June where delegates from all member churches would gather to consider their common regional Christian programme for the next four years.

The annual general meeting elected Mr. J. S. QADIR BAKHSH of the church of Pakistan as President. Mr. WILLIAM K. MALL of the United Presbyterian Church was re-elected as Executive Secretary. The reports of the Boards and committees touched on the broad concerns of the council ranging from Sunday schools work to refugee relief. The meeting brought together church leaders spread across the whole nation.



Newsletter

Director: Samuel M. Isaac
Information: Lee Soo Jin

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VIETNAM

ACS POST CEASEFIRE INITIATIVE

In response to the needs of thousands of families from Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces who are returning home or who are being resettled in new hamlets in the northernmost provinces of Central Vietnam, ACS has sent a team of 6 social workers to Da Nang to assist local social groups and organisations and local leadership and help coordinate their resettlement efforts.

1,200 CHRISTIANS RESETTLED IN BINH TUY PROVINCE

The Relief and Social Committee of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam informed ACS that on 20th April, 1,200 Christians from Quang Ngai arrived by ship to Vung Tau to be resettled in Binh Tuy Province. This is the first group of Quang Ngai Christians to move south for resettlement.

The resettlement programme is undertaken by the Tin Lanh Church with the assistance of the Government and various social agencies and organisations. A total number of 320 families from Quang Ngai will be resettled in Binh Tuy by the Church.

YWCA OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED

On 9th April, ACS Vietnam was informed by Mrs. NGUYEN NAM HOANG, that the YWCA of Vietnam was officially recognised by the Government through the order from the Ministry of Education/General Directorate of Youth on 15th March 1973. The YWCA of Vietnam is now operational with a present membership of 50.

SOCIAL WORKERS COMPLETE ACS SPONSORED STUDIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Two social workers, Misses TRAN THI NEN and NGUYEN THI NGUYEN who were sponsored by the Professional Social Workers Association and financially supported by ACS, in August 1972 to attend a 7½ month training course in rural development at Xavier University, Philippines, have just graduated in March 1973. Miss NEN has returned home to work with the Professional Social Workers Association in Saigon. Miss NGUYEN will further her studies at the University of the Philippines at her own expense.

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